

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 444 155

CS 217 199

AUTHOR Holt-Reynolds, Diane
TITLE Prospective Teachers as Learners: Intellectual Development and Learning To Teach.
PUB DATE 2000-04-26
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 24-28, 2000).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; *English Teacher Education; Higher Education; *Intellectual Development; Interviews; Knowledge Base for Teaching; Methods Courses; Preservice Teachers; Student Attitudes; *Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS *English Majors; Perry Developmental Scheme; Teaching Research

ABSTRACT

William Perry argued that adult development can be marked by a progressively refined set of questions focused on how Authorities like teachers can support multiple right answers and still maintain that there are wrong answers. When prospective English teachers view right and wrong answers as relativistic, they seem to view themselves as purposefully neutral, as prospective discussion hosts charged exclusively with facilitating turn-taking and the creation of an emotionally safe context that encourages all to participate. They expect to coach students' thinking, to inform it, and shape it, even though they are fully aware that there is no one right answer out there. A study explored data taken from a broad, longitudinal study of English majors as they developed subject matter knowledge. The larger study focused heavily on prospective English teachers' personal histories as readers. Prospective teachers (n=12) were interviewed early in their sophomore year and again in their senior year. Data were taken from study participants' responses to a sub-set of the corpus of interview tasks and questions; this sub-set includes a teaching task involving Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven," a literary criticism evaluation task, and a "Romeo and Juliet" teaching task. Students' varied responses to these tasks illustrate how intellectual development is different for each person. Each prospective teacher experienced his/her role projection as the norm. They were unaware of their position on a continuum of development and satisfied with their way of understanding the role of an authority in a literature classroom. (Appended is an explanation of four literary theories. (Contains 12 references.) (NKA)

Prospective Teachers As Learners: Intellectual
Development and Learning To Teach

Diane Holt-Reynolds
University of Oklahoma

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☐ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

D. Holt - Reynolds

Prospective Teachers As Learners: Intellectual Development
and Learning To Teach

When asked, "How did you decide to become a teacher?" many prospective secondary teachers respond by talking about positive experiences they have had with the subject they want to teach. They talk about enjoying that subject matter in high school and thinking that they would like to teach it themselves. Some point to hero-models, to teachers who positively mediated subject with them and whom they hope to emulate. Their eyes shine as they imagine passing along the enthusiasm they developed for subject matter as students of these teachers. Others bring darker tales of anti-models. They tell about teachers whose commitment to subject matter was thin, whose manner was dogmatic or uninspiring. They vow to avoid the kinds of teacher behaviors they saw in those anti-models. Often, they are far more articulate about what to avoid than they are specific about what they imagine instead.

In both story types, teacher educators can hear prospective secondary teachers committing themselves to a future professional role based on their successes as students of a subject matter area and their visions of what excellent teaching of that subject matter area might look like--or what it definitely will not include. Those of us who teach methods course work often find ourselves facing a group of eager beginners who expect that ours is the course which will finally help them master the skills they believe they need in order to enact their visions. We feel the pressure of their expectations. They want us to teach them how to create classrooms where adolescents are as excited about subject matter as they are themselves. They look to us for the skills they believe they need as they assume the role of teacher.

In order to help prospective teachers, teacher educators need to understand more about the character, quality, and sometimes the limitations of the pedagogical roles prospective teachers come to methods courses able to project. Little research to date has focused specifically on the kinds of pedagogical roles prospective secondary teachers envision for themselves (See Holt-Reynolds, 1999, 2000). But we do have a growing

wealth of information about the factors that are most likely to shape these role expectations. The research focused on the ways personal histories affect prospective teachers emerging professional beliefs generally (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1993) is particularly useful.

These studies and others like them encourage us to listen to the kinds of personal experiences prospective teachers have had as learners of subject matter. These studies suggest that conclusions and practical arguments in support of the conclusions prospective teachers have drawn about the factors that affected their successes as students will powerfully influence their emerging professional ideas about what "good teachers" should be like and do (Calderhead & Robson, 1991).

Less attention has been paid to developmental factors that shape and constrain the conclusions prospective teachers are equipped to draw. Given that most of the prospective teachers with whom we work in teacher preparation programs are under 25 years of age, the literature describing young adult intellectual development ought also to inform our thinking. William Perry's work (1968; 1981) in particular provides a useful perspective from which teacher educators might understand more fully the task we undertake as we agree to help prospective secondary teachers learn to enact their visions of teaching.

Teaching And The Right/Wrong Dilemma

Perry argued that adult development can be marked--particularly for those young adults who elect a university experience--by a progressively refined set of questions focused on how Authorities like teachers can support multiple Right Answers and still maintain that there are Wrong Answers. He built his case (1968; 1981) by categorizing the responses of young men to general questions about their experiences as they matriculated through four years of university schooling. While some have rightly pointed to the gender bias inherent in Perry's original work (See Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986), I find Perry's thinking useful as I listen to the ways both young men and young women talk about their future roles as Authorities. Perry outlined nine Positions which he

suggested can describe the way an individual currently understands the interplay between Right Answers, Wrong Answers and Authorities. His developmental outline helps me "hear" the tacit conception of teacher's roles when I listen to prospective teachers.

When prospective English teachers view Right and Wrong Answers as relativistic, when they tell me that any answer is fine as long as the adolescent student can support that answer, they also tend to project non-instructional roles for themselves as teachers. They expect to elicit students' ideas but most often fail to imagine any sort of teacher action that might inform, challenge, improve students' current thinking or even respond to it with more than, "Thank you for your ideas." They seem to view themselves as purposefully neutral, as prospective discussion hosts charged exclusively with facilitating turn-taking and the creation of an emotionally safe context that encourages all to participate.

When prospective teachers view Right and Wrong Answers as a kind of decision or commitment they make amidst a set of potentially equally good, Right Answers, when they tell me that they realize there are multiple Right Answers but that some are more well-reasoned by disciplinary standards than others or that each way of understanding, of expressing a Right Answer inherently omits other possibilities and therefore carries consequences with which they can agree to live, they also tend to project instructional roles for themselves as teachers. They expect to coach students' thinking, to inform it and shape it even though they are fully aware that there is no one Right Answer out there.

While Perry's Positions for describing adult intellectual development do not link intellectual development with success in any profession--they were not intended to describe specifically the intellectual task of learning to teach--his Positions do preference an intellectual development that is progressively constructivist. Perry's Positions mark intellectual growth by noting an individual's development of a liberal view of the role of Authorities. His theories implicitly place greater value on those Positions that move beyond a Right/Wrong view of knowledge, through relativistic thinking and toward a Commitment to a discipline-based rationale for choosing from among multiple, potentially

Right Answers. His bias matches teacher educator's current preference for constructivist epistemologies and pedagogical practices. As such, Perry's basic arguments provide a useful framework for better understanding the strengths and weaknesses in the projections prospective teachers make about their roles as teachers/Authorities and how they might use that role to promote the learning of subject matter.

Data Sources

The data explored here are taken from a broad, longitudinal study of English majors as they developed subject matter knowledge. The larger study focused heavily on prospective English teachers' personal histories as readers. It was primarily designed to document the ways personal expertise as readers affected prospective teachers' thinking about what it means to read literature, to know literature and to teach literature. Prospective English teachers were interviewed early in their sophomore year and again in their senior year. All data included in this report reflect the participant's point of view at the time of the final interview.

The data included here are taken from study participants' responses to a sub-set of the corpus of interview tasks and questions. This sub-set includes a Poe teaching task, a literary criticism evaluation task and a Romeo and Juliet teaching task.

The Poe Teaching Task

In this section of the interview, prospective English teachers were given a copy of Poe's poem, "The Raven." They were asked to read the poem, comment on it generally, add anything they might note as an English major, stipulate the grade level where it might best fit in a high school curriculum, and describe how they might go about teaching it to a group of ninth graders. Interviewers probed descriptions of how the poem might be taught asking these prospective English teachers to be as specific as possible about teaching and assessment strategies and the rationales behind those strategies.

The Literary Criticism Evaluation Task

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Prospective English teachers were shown four, one page essays describing the roles the author, the text, the reader, society and the critic have in the generating meaning around written texts. Each essay represented one particular critical point of view. These included postmodern structuralism, readers response, new criticism and deconstructionism (See Appendix). Prospective English teachers were asked to select the criticisms with which each most agreed and disagreed. Interviewers probed for the reasoning behind each prospective teacher's choices.

The Romeo and Juliet Teaching Task

Most of the prospective English teachers interviewed had read Romeo and Juliet. Participants who had not read this play or who felt too unfamiliar with it to respond were given a choice of three other novel-length works around which the interview then proceeded. Prospective English teachers were asked to describe how they might go about teaching this text to high school students. Interviewers probed for details and rationales. Prospective English teachers were also asked what they thought readers should learn by reading the text and to describe how they might assess that learning. They were then given a set of 20 questions from which they were asked to select items for a summative test over this text. Interviewers probed for reasons behind item selection and asked whether particular items might give rise to wrong answers. Prospective English teachers were asked how they might explain what caused these wrong answers and what they might do next as a teacher given these wrong answers.

Teachers' Roles

Interestingly, although the study interviewed twelve prospective English teachers, these twelve expressed only three distinctly different roles for English teachers. These roles included Teacher As The Right Answer, Teacher As Discussion Facilitator With No Wrong Answers and Teacher As Guide Toward Best Answers. Each role category reflected the subscriber's ability to comfortably navigate in a world that contains multiple

Right Answers and an Authority called Teacher who must in some way manage that multiplicity.

Teacher As The Right Answer

Amber was the only African American English major to volunteer for this study. The possible affects of her ethnicity on her role projections and first year teacher practices are thoroughly explored in a dissertation (Knepper, 1999) that grew out of this study. While those considerations are clearly important for understanding Amber as an emerging teacher, they are less germane here.

Amber was very sure of herself. A gifted student in her own right, she was the youngest of several children all of whom had positioned themselves in professional careers. When asked about her reasons for selecting teaching as a career, Amber explained, "I want to mold students. When you're in high school, you really take heed to what your teachers say." Asked if a high school student would be more likely than a college student to "believe exactly what you say," Amber responded, "Exactly. Because of the fact that I am the teacher."

No one interviewed in this study held a stronger sense of the authority inherent to the role of teacher than did Amber. No other study participant told interviewers that they selected teaching as a career *because of* the power inherent in the role. This makes Amber's projection especially interesting. She evidently saw "teacher" as a powerful and effective role, one she wanted to assume. Her sense of how this role might become important and powerful was related to her beliefs about the role of literature in readers' lives.

A lot of people are turned off by literature because of the way it's taught. If [instead] it's geared toward everyday life, they can understand that this can help them. It could solve some emotional problems, some financial problems. They see how a character in this book dealt with the situation. "Hey, if I do what he did..." That's important, to appreciate literature

As a teacher of literature, Amber projected a powerful and significant role for herself.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

I feel Romeo and Juliet, one of the morals, the ethics of the play is to show young people that it is okay to be in love but you never take it to the extreme they took it. . . . I think that's one of the main morals here, and so I'll teach from that aspect. . . . [Students should know] that this is not just entertainment, that this is something to help them in their future life, endeavors, relationships, whatever. . . . It [a student's response] doesn't have to be exactly quote from quote what I feel, but in so many words, that similar meaning or similar moral should be conveyed from me to them.

The interviewer wondered how Amber might respond if her students failed to get this moral. She explained, "I would just have to kind of drill in into them. Unless there's some total dysfunction, they should pick [the moral] up after I really drill it into their heads."

Again, the interviewer pushed Amber's thinking in this final interview with her. The interviewer asked Amber what she might do if a student argued that Romeo and Juliet demonstrates the romance and correctness of suicide as an option if one is really in love. Amber replied:

We would have to have a talk after school because that is a problem when they say yes, they should commit suicide. I would not lash out at them in class. I would say, "Well, suicide is totally unethical in my personal opinion, and it doesn't solve any problems because you're gone. If you can get someone to solve your problems, you can live a fulfilled life." And I would really push my morals onto this person. I know I shouldn't do that in a classroom, but you never know what this person could be thinking, and I would hate [it if] months or years down the line a similar situation happens to them and no one said their say. . . . You have to put your point of view on the line whether it hurts the child's feelings or not. . . . I think, as a teacher, I have that right. If I see some of my children straying in their train of thought, then I would have to come across very forceful with the way I felt because I would never want them to go astray.

Amber's projected role for herself as a teacher was a potent and highly influential one. She expressed only minimal concern about putting her point of view on the line and expecting her students to accept it as The Right Answer. "I think, as a teacher, I have that right," she told us. No one else in this study expressed as authoritative a role for a literature teacher. But no one else saw literature as texts with Right Answers for life questions in them. In fact, no one else imagined a world where there exist Right Answers.

Amber's sense of role positioned her to resist implementing the constructivist strategies she was exposed to in her teacher education methods course work. Throughout

her year-long internship, Amber retained her sense of role and developed strategies to enact it (See Knepper, 1999). Three years later, she is still teaching and completing her masters degree in curriculum and instruction.

Teacher As Discussion Facilitator With No Wrong Answers

By far the most popular role project by these prospective English teachers was the Teacher As Discussion Facilitator role. Most study participants were grappling with issues of multiplicity. They had noticed that literature could be interpreted in a variety of ways; their professors rewarded a variety of Right Answers. And they also noticed that, despite the multiplicity of Right Answers, some answers were judged wrong by these Authorities. Puzzling out how it is possible to have wrong answers but still have multiple right answers is an issue Perry warns will be a struggle for most college and university students.

Perry devoted two Positions plus one sub-position to this intellectual dilemma. While he distinguishes in refined ways between Multiplicity and Relativity as intellectual Positions, his distinctions are not especially helpful when looking at prospective teacher thinking. In both Positions, a young adult will, in effect, duck the question of right Answers among multiple Right Answers by arguing that all answers are Right; no answers are Wrong. At these intellectual Positions, Perry expects a young adult to resort to relativism to explain how Right Answers can be so different from one another. "Everyone has a right to an opinion and none is better than another," is typically the underlying theory.

Bruce. The only Latino student to volunteer for this study, Bruce was a voracious reader. He simply loved books--all books. It is highly likely that Bruce chose teaching as a career because he imagined it would offer him the opportunity to continue his life as an English major--to read books and talk about them with others. Like most prospective teachers in this study, Bruce imagined that readers would operate pretty independently around text while the teacher might need to motivate students to do the reading and facilitate conversations about the text following the reading. He expected variation in students' interpretations of the text.

People see things in so many different ways. Everybody has different teachers. So we learn different things. People are raised different ways. Literature is such a broad topic. You can't even know. People are going to disagree. No one is going to have the same opinion.

Asked what he might do to teach "The Raven," Bruce said, "I want to get students to come up with answers that fit the poem. I'm not saying that my opinion has to be the right opinion, but I want things that are roughly in the ballpark." Bruce's description of his future role as a teacher offers a glimpse of an intellectual theory in transition. He saw multiple Right Answers as an attractive, reasonable and unpreventable condition but also believed that a reader should be able to locate the Right Answer with which the author might agree--something "in the ballpark."

Bruce described his role in this as minimal. He would somehow "get students" to generate answers "that fit the poem." Asked what he might do if students constructed wrong responses to the poem, Bruce described how he might respond as a teacher.

Some people say, "Well, I don't know what the heck this guy is saying," and I say, "Well, it's in there." I mean, it took me a couple of times [reading the poem] to even come up with what I said [a few minutes ago in the interview], and I don't even know if I'm right. So, [I'd tell them] just read it harder. Read it slowly.

Bruce's comment suggested that he could not imagine a truly wrong answer if a student had genuinely read the poem. He went on to imagine that, as the teacher, he would "go over the poem" stanza by stanza with students. His teacher action makes sense because he believed that the Answers are "in there," in the poem itself.

Unlike Amber who held inside herself a definitive meaning for every text, Bruce wanted students to go to the text for answers. This seemed to leave him less certain of his role. He did not see himself as a source for answers/interpretations; he believed that Answers are there in the text and that students should be able to find them, to be "in the ballpark" if they read "harder" and slowly. As teacher, he did not imagine that he would be any real influence on the intellectual work of reading.

When asked about questions he might pose to students while going over the poem stanza by stanza, Bruce told the interviewer that teachers should ask "questions that don't

suggest anything." He appeared to want to take himself as the teacher as far out of the meaning making process as possible.

Bruce's evaluation of the literary criticisms suggested that he was certain that authors intend particular meanings when they write but that he was ambivalent about whether readers' interpretations had to exactly match authors' intentions.

The writer is trying to get a message out. A lot of times, when people try to read these books, they come up with stuff that is off the wall. I just don't think the writer would appreciate that. It's real important that you understand what the writer is trying to say. You [should] read more out of the novel than into it.

At the end of the literary criticism evaluation task, Bruce concluded, "The meaning is in the text, but the meaning is also in the reader because it's the reader that interprets the text."

To help Bruce clarify how his perspective on reading might affect his role as a teacher, the interviewer asked, "Can the reader interpret [a text] any way and count that as being correct because that's the way the reader interprets it?" Bruce's reply demonstrates his transition between a world where there is One Right Answer and a world where multiple Right Answers are possible:

That's tough. If the reader really feels that way and interprets it that way, even if the author doesn't feel that way, I guess you would have to consider that correct.

As Perry's adult intellectual development theory predicts, Bruce was puzzling his way through the dilemma of multiple Right Answers even though he seemed to also believe that there is one intended Right Answer. A prospective English teacher plagued with this ambivalence would certainly have a difficult time envisioning a role for himself as the teacher/authority in the middle.

The interviewer went one step further asking, "If [students] can interpret [the text] any way they want, what does that mean your job is?" Bruce replied:

If they can show me why they interpret it that way and give me a reason why, then I can understand. But if I see that they're interpreting it because they half read it or didn't really get into it, then I guess I'll tell them to go

over it again. And also, I will try and tell them maybe what the author had in mind when he was writing it.

The interviewer followed up with, "How do we know what the author had in mind when he was writing it?" Bruce:

I hope he wrote a foreword or something! Maybe the background of the author will help out in that respect. . . . hopefully the author will be clear enough so the reader can understand and synthesize. The reader can understand if [the author is] clear enough, descriptive enough.

This interview sequence demonstrates Bruce's sense that there are Right interpretations out there but that these will vary as individuals add their own meanings and experiences to the text's meaning. Bruce seemed certain that authors had intended Right interpretations and that if authors write well and readers read well, there would be little for him to do as the teacher other than put authors and readers together.

This non-instructional role for the teacher did not ultimately work well for Bruce. Three months into his internship, Bruce withdrew from his certification program.

Taylor. Taylor, too, held a non-instructional vision of herself as a teacher. A traditional teacher education student, she expected to teach for only a few years before pursuing an administrative career. Unlike Bruce, she do not believe that authors had intended meanings or that readers should find Right Answers. Taylor held an any-answer-is-good perspective.

My job would be to kind of be the prober in class discussion. I would just kind of be the one asking questions for the class to talk about--real general questions. Or I'll play devil's advocate to what they do say and have them think about it or provide evidence for it and just get the class discussion going. . . . I just let ideas come out.

In this statement, Taylor made herself clear. Her role as the teacher would be to engender class discussion, to "let ideas come out." Even her rationale for probing students' responses was more about fostering the discussion itself than about informing students' current thinking. Like Bruce, Taylor saw Answers as residing inside student readers. Like Bruce, she did not expect to influence those answers herself.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

But Taylor went one step further than Bruce. Bruce believed that some answers would be "out of the ballpark. Taylor did not. "I'm not searching for one meaning. I'm searching for possible meanings." She explained that readers would gain pleasure from the recognition that "there is another interpretation. That there are others." It was role encouraging students to voice of these multiple interpretations that Taylor sought.

You talk in class; you hear three more meanings. And then your understanding is how you kind of choose to handle all of these meanings and how you put them together, take parts, delete some. So, that's your understanding. And you gain a greater pleasure if you are open as a reader. You just listen to them all. Accept or don't accept. And you just bring it all together into an understanding. It's very individual. . . . I don't necessarily think that, after you've heard everything and recognized everything, that you need to say, "Okay. This is understanding for me." I think you just gain understanding by the open-mindedness part of it, of just recognizing all the different [interpretations]. That's what I think understanding is. . . . Everyone's individual interpretation has value. . . . I'll look at a student's passion. If he is adamant and real passionate, I don't want to stifle him and say, "No, you're wrong."

Taylor was drawing on her understanding of her own experiences as a reader. from there, she projected a role for herself as a teacher.

I think what happened to me is one of the most powerful ways [to help students become better interpreters]. That is the idea of building confidence that all interpretations are valid. Just this idea of constantly saying, "Okay, let's read this poem. What do you think it means? Oh, great idea! Good idea! . . . All you need to do is build up their confidence.

Her vision of how she would translate these beliefs into a concrete description of what she would do as a teacher to "build up their confidence" became clear as she described how she might teach "The Raven."

What would I do? I really believe in this. Let the kids get out of it what they get out of it. Don't let them slack off and say, "I don't get it." I could see myself having a reading of this in class. Have students brainstorm meanings or discuss questions or what they don't understand. . . . [I'd ask], "What meaning did you get out of this? Bring me in something that represents that meaning and kind of create a booklet. Poems or song lyrics. It can be pictures or cut-outs or whatever." . . . Then, they can stand up in front of class and say, "Well, this is very depressing. So I went to the library and I made the first page of my booklet obituaries because I hear death in this poem." I'd have them create something tangible that represents their meaning physically and require a presentation to really emphasize that what everyone got out of this is different.

Taylor had said, "I really believe this." She had indicated that she imagined a classroom with no wrong answers, nothing for a teacher to do other than elicit and reward the current thinking of her students. The interviewer wanted to probe Taylor's vision. So, the interviewer pretended to be a student attempting her assignment.

Suppose I bring you in a picture of an automobile accident because in "The Raven," this guy was in an auto accident and his wife died and now he's in a wheelchair with a canary a friend brought over. His wife is a ghost. He is real depressed, on drugs because he is in pain and he thinks the canary is a raven.

Within "The Raven" there is no textual support for imagining it as a story about an automobile accident. If Taylor had any reservations about the potential for wrong interpretations, this response should have triggered them. But Taylor responded to the booklet's length, not to its content. "I would realize that my assignment--I was anticipating maybe a booklet of poems or maybe some song lyrics, not just one picture with a two second explanation." She seemed either undisturbed by or unaware of the mismatch between the interviewer's ideas about the poem and its literal-level content.

Following Taylor's lead, the interviewer expanded this imaginary booklet to include a few newspaper clippings about auto accidents resulting from drunk driving, a personal story of an uncle who lost a child due to a drunk driver and a request that her school start a SADD group.

Taylor liked this expanded project. "I like how you interpreted or created a story. I like how you brought in personal reflections. But I still need your reflection on the poem. Why is he writing it? Is he trying to tell people something?" Still playing the role of an imaginary student, the interviewer explained that Poe was trying to warn people about the evils of drunk driving. Taylor accepted that but wanted "more." She concluded by noting, "You're not too far off. It's just that I need a connector," between the ideas presented and the poem.

Taylor was never satisfied with this imaginary persona's attempts to link an interpretation to the poem, but neither did she challenge the rightness of the student's

reading. At no point did she assume a role that included an effort to inform the student's current understanding in any way. Playing her role as a teacher, Taylor coached only the rightness of the project.

The research team was unable to follow each study participant much beyond completion of the certification program. Taylor did complete her certification requirements. She passed all her work including her field work with high marks.

Mary. Mary was also a traditional teacher education student. She attended an urban high school and graduated valedictorian of her class. Like Bruce and Taylor, Mary envisioned a non-instructional role for the teacher. Her evaluation of the literature criticisms revealed her perspective on the issue of multiple right interpretations Vs. potentially Wrong interpretations. She explained, "I think a reader's role is to discover whatever he wants. . . . I don't think that everybody can have the same interpretation." Like both Bruce and Taylor, she concluded that readers would be able to generate these interpretations without much help from a teacher. "I believe that somebody can find a constant theme that runs through the book by themselves."

Mary's role projection differed from those of Bruce and Taylor only in its emphasis on the negative. While Bruce saw his role as benign and Taylor saw hers as facilitator, Mary seemed to build her role by noticing what kinds of teacher actions to avoid. Asked how it happens that some high school readers say that they are unable to find meaning in a poem like "The Raven," Mary explained that these readers are actually victims of teachers with low expectations.

I think that most teachers go in with expectations that the kids don't know very much. And students, knowing that's what the teacher thinks about them, fall into that trap and let them believe that and then they don't try as hard.

She went on to describe what a teacher does not do. The result was a non-instructional role for teachers.

The teacher doesn't fit into the picture for me when I read. I get the book and I consider the author and I consider the period and the text. So that is a private experience for me. For somebody else, I can't say what the teacher

would do. I can't say what I'm going to do. A teacher is not an influence when I read.

A talented, skilled reader herself, Mary seemed to be generalizing from her own experiences as a reader. She reported that she read independently with little or no need for a teacher's support. Her interviews are noticeably silent on the topic of what a teacher might *do* in a classroom. When asked directly what a literature teacher should know or do to be effective, Mary changed the question. She responded by describing, not what a literature teacher should do, but by listing the personal characteristics a literature teacher should possess.

Knowledge, patience, flexibility. They have to bridge the generation gap. They have to be good story tellers. They have to be good listeners. There are so many characteristics. They have to share; they have to give the student a chance to speak and use their own voice and create a good class community so that students feel they can share without being ridiculed. I mean, anything you would think a good teacher would have to do would be applied to a teacher of literature except the most important thing with literature is that students make sure they're safe because nobody wants to be made a fool of. Teachers must be open minded, flexible and able to keep [students] on task because students can go off on a tangent and teachers have to be able to incorporate that tangent back into the original plan but at the same time make students feel worthwhile.

Mary's list is noticeably devoid of anything literature-specific. Apparently she realized this because within the text of her response, she spontaneously attempted to make her list literature-specific. She added, "The most important thing with literature is that students make sure they're safe." Even that sentence is minus a reference to the teacher. *Students* must make sure they are safe--evidently in order to become willing to participate in class discussion. Within the discussion, Mary imagined that teachers would have to maintain the focus and "make students feel worthwhile."

Teacher As Guide Toward Best Answers

LeaAnn and McLen offered a different intellectual theory. Both envisioned a substantial role for themselves as teachers. Unlike Amber who also imagined a powerful role for herself as the source of Right Answers, these two offered evidence of their relative comfort with multiple good answers all of which might be deemed Right. Both had

developed a conscious, strategic, disciplined system for evaluating the potential Rightness of answers.

Perry suggests that young adult intellectual development is marked by a passage through Positions of relativistic thinking into a Position of commitment. He describes this Position as one in which a young adult is aware that there are multiple Right Answers but that there is a need for selecting from among them one course of action to follow. To make such a choice minus a sense that one answer is really The Right one and without avoiding the problem by accepting any and all answers as Right, a young adult finds that he/she needs to commit herself/himself to a system for judging or evaluating these equally Right Answers. Perry calls the Position a committed one because intellectually, the young adult realizes that he/she is choosing a strategy that will generate judgments and that the strategy will inherently preference some Right ways of thinking but eliminate other equally Right ways of thinking. While relativistic thinking allows young adults the luxury of never judging anything Wrong, committed thinking admits that there are Wrong Answers even though there are no Right Answers. The young adult so positioned is willing to choose a disciplined method for selecting a best answer and then to commit to the consequences of her/his choices.

LeaAnn. LeaAnn's parents would have paid for her education had she pursued a degree in business. But LeaAnn wanted to teach. Working while a student and especially long hours in the summers, LeaAnn was only a little older than a traditional teacher education student. By the time she entered this study, she had chosen to negotiate her way through the maze of potentially Right interpretations to a text by drawing heavily on one of many discipline-based methods for arriving at and defending a range of Right interpretations in literature. She wanted readers to use the text itself as evidence in support of their interpretations. She imagined that textual evidence might be cited in defense of multiple right interpretations and that these would differ from one another. And she

imagined the possibility of Wrong interpretations--interpretations for which no textual evidence would be available.

Everyone learns different things from even the same piece of literature. . . . Everyone who reads a piece of literature is going to get a different aspect on it. You can't get a different aspect on a math problem; it's right or wrong. In literature, there are so many different opinions. Some people are going to be wrong.

LeaAnn had been examining the four literary criticisms when she voiced the comment above. Asked by the interviewer to explain how these multiple right aspects or opinions can exist, she explained:

People disagree about everything, probably because a lot of people seem to take on the ideas of their teachers. Like studying history. It can easily be seen if you have an instructor who was a populist. You ask him about the railroad strike and he gives you a populist response just because that's how he [the professor] feels. I'm at the point now where I like to get all the different kinds of views from a teacher so I can pick which one I like and kind of formulate my own [point of view]. But I've seen a lot of students who just adapt--like a kind of chameleon, I call it. [They] just sink right in[to] the instructor's views.

LeaAnn was aware of discipline-based strategies for interpreting history. She was equally aware of these in literature. While examining very different critical responses to "The Raven," LeaAnn explained how she would respond if, after reading these with students, they asked her which was right. "I would say they are all right." The interviewer countered with, "But one says [the poem] is great and one says it's terrible. How can they both be right?"

I'd say, "Well, they each have their own reasons to support their views. . . . I would explain [to students]--really, really push the issue that you don't have to agree with me [about the poem] as long as you can support your view point. I would say, "Sure, agree [with critic] that Poe is crazy." Even if I thought Poe was completely sane, I could say, "You can think he is crazy, just show me how. Why do you think his life made him that way or what in his writing makes you think he's insane?"

LeaAnn imagined a classroom where multiple Right Answer would be more than tolerated; they would be reasonable. While Taylor and Bruce had only vague notions about what a student would do to support an interpretation, LeaAnn was more clear. She expected readers to use pieces of the text as evidence in support of their conclusion.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

She made her thinking concrete as she described her projected role in assessing student learning after teaching "The Raven." LeaAnn proposed using a paper as an assessment tool. The interviewer then posed an imaginary problem. "Suppose you got papers back from some of your students that were below the standards you would expect. What would you do about it?"

LeaAnn noted that if the papers were full of mechanical errors, she'd put that down to laziness.

But if they read "The Raven" totally different than I read it, fine. I don't think I have a problem with that, but if they think this bird was his friend, if they want to say that and they can think of good evidence from the work and support it--they had better come up with something big for something crazy like that. But I'll be okay with that. If they're going to come up with something totally off base with nothing to support it, that's not going to get a good grade. And I'll tell them about it and have them come up after class or something and talk and say, "Well, what was your problem? Didn't you understand the poem or did you just not use evidence. Talk to me."

LeaAnn did not imagine that students' responses would necessarily mirror her own as Amber imagined. But she did envision herself as the person responsible for challenging readers when their interpretations were unsupported and helping readers learn how to use the text to defend their interpretations. LeaAnn had an active, powerful and instructional role in mind for herself.

Asked how she might teach the poem, LeaAnn drew a picture of an active teacher able to predict areas where students might have difficulty and guide their investigations as readers.

Since they would probably be lost in the beginning, I'd make a big group discussion that would probably make sure it was on the right track from the beginning so they don't get discouraged because [the poem] is really long. I wouldn't want them to cop out on me after the second stanza and forget about it. We would probably do two or three stanzas as a whole class and then I would probably break them into groups. . . . I would just give each group two or three stanzas and they would really work at it and paraphrase almost line for line what is meant. And then we would get together and read it as a whole using the students' renditions, and I'd make sure they were on track, not coming up with something bizarre.

Like Bruce, Taylor and Mary, LeaAnn envisioned a classroom filled with student talk and discussion. Unlike these other three, she also envisioned a role for herself that

would go far beyond that of discussion facilitator. LeaAnn imagined that she would be the person to make sure that students' emerging ideas are "on track."

When the interviewer asked her, "What would you be doing while they are working in small groups?" LeaAnn made her role even more clear.

Going around and making sure that they were getting out of it what they were supposed to be. Insure that they are getting on track so that when they come back in the big group discussion they're not reading. "Oh, the raven took off flying away and said, 'I'll come back another day.'" Each group would read their paraphrasing in sequence and then we'd have like a big class discussion on "What's the moral of this? Is this a fable or what?" And I'm sure [students] are going to have questions too. Got to leave time for that.

Here we see a prospective teacher willing to take as strong a role as Amber imagined but also able to manage and support students as they read and interpret literature for themselves. We see a prospective teacher maintain her sense of instructional Authority even though she could not use Right Answers as the basis for that authority. LeaAnn as a prospective teacher could stipulate how to defend a position and she could imagine sharing that process with students, teaching them to defend their interpretations. Hers was not the simplistic "Anything goes as long as you defend it," position taken by Bruce, Taylor and Mary.

While examining potential test items (LeaAnn chose The Scarlet Letter as a text), she commented on the potential for a wrong responses to items targeted by the interviewer. Most study participants denied that a wrong answer would be possible if they judged that the test item called for anything beyond recall of the play or novel. LeaAnn's position differed.

I think you can be wrong on this question, "What kind of child was Pearl?" I think the range for being right and kind of right is a lot bigger than [the range for] being wrong. . . . You have to give examples to support [your answer]. If you truly believe that she was this great kid, fine--as long as you can show me why.

While Amber imagined that wrong answers would be those that differed from her own, LeaAnn imagined they would be answers for which no textual support would be

available. She seemed to have in mind a disciplined strategy for defending and validating a point of view and thereby legitimizing multiple interpretations.

McLen. Also a traditional education student, McLen had a strong interest in both history and English. He read mostly to learn about historical topics of interest to him, most frequently, The Beatles and the 1960's. McLen saw novels as windows into topics, feeling and ideas unavailable to readers in their own lives. In some ways, he was the most philosophical of the study participants.

McLen seemed to be actively working out questions of multiplicity, relativity and commitment during the time he was interviewed. Consequently, he offered especially clean evidence. Asked to describe someone who knows literature, he outlined two of the three themes that would structure and define his responses across the interview protocols: 1) reading is a complex and energetic activity; and 2) not all opinions about literature are right.

To know literature you have to have feeling, to read it, to approach it, to concentrate on it, to interact with the text, ask questions, and if you're talking about the text to be able to go back and find out where things happen. This is why I think things happened; this makes me think this. . . . You can have a belief that's really off the way but if you can ground it in fact, well, it's kind of valid. That's the whole thing. Some people in my class yesterday were saying they just have their opinion. Well, I go, "No. It's not like every opinion goes. The opinions that go are the ones that have some kind of validity." You can stretch it, but it's got to have something. You can't just say, "It's just my interpretation." . . .

Like LeaAnn, McLen seemed confident in his thinking on the question of what legitimizes some opinions/interpretations while others are not so legitimate. He had watched his professors grade his writing and concluded that the evidence he included was the feature to which his professors responded, not his particular point of view.

You've just got to write the way they want you to write. So much is a teacher's opinion. How can you criticize or grade somebody's writing? It's really hard for me to imagine that. That's one of the big things . . . I understand that a professor will grade something on how I defend my position. That in a way is gradeable. It's still the grader's opinion on how they do it, so there's still a lot of bias.

. "One of the big things" that seemed to bother McLen was his projected role as a grader of students' written thinking. He believed "It's the grader's opinion" about

whether a writer's evidence is enough. Projecting his own grading responsibilities, McLen was a little worried. His concern surfaced when asked what he might say to students if they want him to tell them which literary critic of Poe is right.

I'd say that none of them is right. . . . I know that there shouldn't be anything that's definitely right or definitely wrong. But see, the whole thing comes out to grading someone. If they are going to write something, are they going to have something to back it up? What if I have this other point of view--and they backed up [their own]? They may think it's fine but I don't. . . . What I would like to do is have as much flexibility as I could to other people's points of view.

McLen went on to note that he saw himself as a rather stubborn person capable of unfairly condemning another's point of view simply because it differed from his own. He hoped that as a teacher he could learn to avoid that bias.

McLen's ability to assess himself in this way marks him as a young adult who had developed into a committed intellectual position. He had apparently accepted his authority as an evaluator and was actively working out how he might deploy that power. Without a belief in One Right Answer to guide him, McLen faced head on the consequences of his own judgment.

When asked to describe how he might teach "The Raven," McLen indicated that he valued discussion.

You would see me up front talking and then trying to get a conversation going because once they start talking about it, their ideas will start coming out and they'll understand it. . . . I'm not going to tell them how it applies to them. Maybe it doesn't. But maybe I would think of something of how it would apply to me and then use an example of myself. And then maybe I could get someone else. . . . Or I could have them write something in class, how what they read makes them feel. And I'd take them and read them to myself just to see the different points of view. And if I find something, I'll say, "This is good. Who wrote it?" and that will start a conversation.

Taylor, Bruce and Mary valued discussion as an end in itself. But McLen's focus was on helping students understand the poem. He believed that discussion would serve this end. While his projected strategies for prompting discussion may seem naive, his role was clear--help students understand the poem. If students were having difficulty with the poem, McLen imagined that their difficulty would be with Poe's language.

He writes in a way that can be understood but he uses words and language and sentence structure that are different from the way people talk now, different from the way people write now. So, no matter what your reading level is or your heritage, it might be difficult to understand.

To help them understand, McLen would not simply ask them to "read it harder" as Bruce imagined doing. McLen would::

See what they were thinking, what they think a different thing means. That's where you get into trouble. If you didn't understand certain things or didn't know what certain words mean. So, if they are missing pieces, try to find out what they don't understand and what's kind of out there for them. Then, it should make sense.

McLen imagined actively working with the meanings students might make as readers. He had concrete ideas about how to achieve this end. He imagined helping student readers to envision (See NCTE Standards, 1996) the poem.

One thing I would do is try to get the students to set up a little map of the area, decide what they think the room looks like and where the bird is. [This would] help me try to give them the meaning out of the context rather than word by word. Try to overcome the language.

And he imagined using his own reading as a model students might follow. I'd ask them questions about certain things to get them to think. While they're reading it. One thing I always thought was, some teachers of mine used themselves as an example, how they read or what they're wondering about. That's the kind of thing I would like to do. Read certain parts again [in class]. I remember in high school our teacher doing that. It kind of highlights certain parts. That's kind of usual, to read the parts and people kind of go through how things connect. So, maybe they'll learn how to recognize different parts. . . . The whole idea is to get them involved in the text and understanding it to help them become better readers and see how the characters make decisions. Become better decision makers.

McLen and LeaAnn projected powerful roles for themselves as teachers. Each believed that student readers could be taught to understand, reason about and interpret texts. Both saw a way to do this without "drilling into" students a Right interpretation. Neither imagined teachers as people who simply elicit responses from all students without evaluating and shaping those responses.

Teaching As An Active Role

Perry's intellectual Positions are essentially developmental. Like all developmental theories, they therefore suggest that movement from one position to a more advanced position is desirable progress. When I apply his theory to young adults trying to learn to

teach, I share his bias. Given education's current constructivist leanings, prospective teachers like LeaAnn and McLen seem to project roles for themselves that show more intellectual progress than the role Amber projected for herself. Mary, Bruce and Taylor offered projections that have the advantage of recognition of multiple Right Answers. But their projections pictured teachers with no sense for how to use students' thinking to co-construct new, more sophisticated or informed interpretations of literature. Only McLen and LeaAnn imagined drawing on and actively teaching the underpinnings of the discipline of interpreting.

As an English methods educator, I would find more to built on within the images LeaAnn and McLen would bring to our course work. Their intellectual development would position them well for learning to enact the pedagogical strategies most valued by English teachers and promoted by The National Standards For The Language Arts. Mary, Taylor and Bruce represent prospective teachers I would hope I could identify and challenge. Left unchallenged, their projections would likely yield new teachers able to draw most students into a conversation but unable to make that conversation truly educative. A teacher who believes that, "Whatever you think is good enough," misses the point and power of classroom discussion, misses the opportunity to help adolescent readers read more independently by modeling a discipline-based strategy for thinking about texts and defending one's interpretations.

Each prospective teacher in this study experienced his or her role projection as the norm. They were unaware of their Position on a continuum of development. They were satisfied with their way of understanding the role of an Authority in a literature classroom. Most were taking their first English methods courses as they completed their final interviews. They were not aware that the role they imagined might be acting to tacitly filter their learning in that methods course.

Mary provided anecdotal evidence that this might be the case. She actively resisted her methods course instructor's requests that she stipulate learning objectives or develop

assessment techniques for finding out whether her objectives were met. Mary wanted to cite the planned class activity as an objective; its completion would serve as assessment. Her methods instructor wanted her to specify what students might learn from engaging in the activity she planned. Mary led a small methods class coup against her instructor. Her vision of her role as a literature teacher and the vision her methods instructor held were fundamentally at odds.

And so . . .

As teacher educators, we can and should be aware of the projected roles our prospective teachers imagine for themselves. Understanding that these roles are intimately linked with prospective teachers' larger issues of intellectual development can and should help us respect their thinking even as we attempt to influence it.

We actually have little choice. The constructivist pedagogies we espouse depend on teachers who see knowledge as created rather than fixed and who are willing to help students shape their existing knowledge toward some end to which the teacher is willing to commit. Unfortunately, "Anything goes" and other sorts of relativistic points of view can mask themselves. What we see may look a lot like a beginner's naive and imperfect early attempts at genuine constructivism. Taylor became certified. Our assumption that such a beginning teacher will grow into more artful constructivist teaching patterns may be grossly false.

Learning more about how prospective teachers have negotiated their position on questions of multiple Right Answers can help identify those young adults for whom this is still a dilemma. Until they can achieve a kind of peace amidst the ambiguity, we can expect them to do little more than reward students' current understanding. We cannot hope that they will learn to shape students as thinkers and knowers. We cannot hope that they will actually teach.

Appendix

Theory #1 Postmodern Structuralism

A **work of literature** is a self-contained world. The meaning is found within the text itself. The various parts of the text may conflict or be in tension. The form or structure of the work pulls these parts together into a coherent whole. The form is the meaning.

Since a literary work contains its own reality and its form is its meaning, knowledge of the intentions or the life and times of the **author** is not important for understanding what the work means.

Similarly, since the work exists in and is its own world, **society** has little influence on the meaning of a text.

The **reader** must experience the meaning of the work. However, experiencing the meaning is not simply a matter of responding subjectively and/or affectively to the work. Experiencing the meaning requires hard-nosed, rigorous, objective analyses of the text.

This is where the **critic** comes in. The critic cannot merely paraphrase the meaning for the reader. Indeed, since the meaning of a work is its form, it cannot be paraphrased. "Close" reading--attention to the use and meaning of words, symbols, metaphors and structure--is required. The critic helps the reader learn to do this close reading.

Theory #2: Readers Response

The reader largely determines the meaning of a **work of literature**. Nevertheless, the text sets constraints on the meaning that the reader can find because its language and structure elicit certain common responses rather than others.

One group of critics who adhere to this idea claim that all **authors** necessarily have an intended audience in mind when writing. Other critics argue that meaning is created by reading; thus the reader is really the **author**.

The **reader** plays the central role in both of these views. If the author writes for an intended reader (audience), the reader effectively controls the meaning of the text. If the reader is the author, then the reader creates whatever meaning the text has through the act of reading.

Forces within **society** affect the backgrounds that authors and readers bring to a text. Similar backgrounds and perspectives lead author and reader to create meanings for a text that are compatible.

The **critics** define and write about the respective roles of the text, author, reader, society, and critics. Some critics primarily describe how and why these roles developed and are the way they are; other critics attempt to demonstrate how the reader functions as author of what is read.

Theory #3: New Criticism

A **work of literature** exposes the reader to other points of view, other imaginations, other emotions and actions, and enables the reader to see more and further and, hence, to become a better person. The traditions and cultural values found in the greatest literature represent some of the finest sentiments and achievements of the species: particular notions of the True and Beautiful and of enduring moral and aesthetic values; an affinity for the "eternal" human truths; a sense of a shared humanity and a deep and abiding awareness of the importance of democratic ideals.

The **author**, particularly the author of a great work, creates a world so powerful and alive that a reader actually experiences themes that are ageless and comes to understand universal truths.

The **reader's** role is to discover the meaning of the text, a meaning that transcends the time and circumstances in which it was written. In discovering this meaning, the reader also learns about her or his own existence and shared humanity as well as his or her individuality and distinctive heritage. A reader reads to become a more complete and better person.

The ideals and truths depicted in literature can only imperfectly be realized in **society**. But by reading and becoming a better person, the individual contributes to the improvement of society as a whole.

The **critic** helps the reader to learn to read critically, to find the meaning more readily. The reader thus becomes capable of experiencing the meaning more deeply and intensely and, hence, gains increased pleasure and understanding from reading.

Theory #4: Deconstructionism

A **work of literature** has no fixed or constant meaning. A single word can be defined in multiple ways; and each definition of a given word is a definition of that word by default: that is, because it is not the definition of a different word. Each of the myriad words, separately and strung together, impart to the text an uncertainty and indeterminableness. Other texts, past and future, entwine with a work. Also present in any work are faint suggestions of alternative texts that are absent only because the author chose to write the one written.

The words used and the meaning the **author** wants cannot coincide; notions about the author's intention and original meaning are merely empty phrases.

The **reader** will find at most an ebb and flow of shadowy meanings that fade, reform, fade again.

What is true of a single work is true of Literature as a whole; and if Literature cannot capture and hold meaning, can there be any ultimate meaning in **society**?

The role of the **critic** is to "defamiliarize" the text: to enable the reader to see that the appearance of meaning is but illusion; to expose as rhetoric claims that the traditional moral and cultural values transmitted by "Great Literature" are immutable and eternal truths. It is through this rhetoric that traditional authority and privilege perpetuates itself.

Bibliography

- Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind. New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- Calderhead, J., & Robson, M. (1991). Images of teaching: Student teachers' early conceptions of classroom practice. Teaching and Teacher Education, 7(1), 1-8.
- Holt-Reynolds, D. (2000). What does the teacher do? Constructivist pedagogies and prospective teachers' beliefs about the role of a teacher. Teaching and Teacher Education.
- Holt-Reynolds, D. (1999). Good readers, good teachers? Subject matter expertise as a challenge for learning to teach. The Harvard Educational Review, 69(1), 29-50.
- Holt-Reynolds, D. (1994). When agreeing with the professor is bad news for preservice teacher educators: Jeneane, her persona history and course work. Teacher Education Quarterly, 1(21), 13-35.
- Kagan, D. (1992). Implications of research on teacher beliefs. Educational Psychologist, 27(1), 65-90.
- Knepper, Elizabeth. (1999). One prospective literature teacher's experience with practice: Her developing pedagogical content knowledge. Unpublished dissertation, Michigan State University
- Knowles, J. G. & Holt-Reynolds, D. (1991). Shaping pedagogies through personal histories in preservice teacher education. Teachers College Record, 93(1), 87-113.
- Pajares, F., (1993). Preservice teacher beliefs: A focus for teacher education. Action in Teacher Education, 15(2), 45-54.
- Perry, W. G. (1968). Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A scheme. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
- Perry, W. G. (1981). Cognitive and ethical growth: The making of meaning. In A. W. Chickering (Ed.), The modern American College.
- Standards for the English language arts. (1996). International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English.